



TESTIMONY FOR SENATE HEALTH POLICY COMMITTEE – SENATE BILL 723

OCTOBER 6, 2011

I am offering testimony today on behalf of the Michigan Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, the statewide organization which promotes public policy and education to consumers and professionals about the philosophies and principles of hospice and palliative care at the end of life.

MHPCO is supportive of the concept embodied in Senate Bill 723. An important part of our mission is to promote thoughtful and timely planning for end of life care, and to assure that physicians, family members and other caregivers know and honor every individual's end of life wishes. So we appreciate that a registry like one created in this bill is an admirable goal.

We have some concerns, however, and feel that the bill needs further work and the involvement of additional stakeholders before it is ready to advance.

First, we are uncomfortable with the intended home of the registry. While it is not named in the bill and could in theory end up housed elsewhere, a registry for advance directives which is housed at an organ donation center is problematic and, we feel the possibility or appearance of conflicts of interest in such an arrangement loom large. We feel it is simply inappropriate; instead MHPCO recommends that a process for the development and housing of advance care planning documents be developed by a stakeholder group.

Second, there is no uniform, simple document for advance care planning that all providers and caregivers use in Michigan, although MHPCO and others are working hard right now to help develop such a document. It's our fear that, until such a simple and uniform document is developed and adopted, no one will scroll through pages and pages of differently formatted legal documents on a registry to determine what a patient's wishes actually are, making the notion of "peace of mind" something of a fiction.

Finally, we believe that resources would be better used at this time to promote the philosophy and tools of advance care planning rather than to build a cart when the horse isn't yet ready.

None of our concerns are insurmountable, and MHPCO certainly does not oppose the objectives of SB 723. Again, though, we feel there are many issues inherent in the bill that have yet to be thoroughly addressed. We ask that you "slow down" to allow for robust discussion before moving the bill.

Respectfully,

Lisa Ashley

President and CEO, Michigan Hospice and Palliative Care Organization